A

PLEASING PROSPECT

TO ALL

TRUE BELIEVERS.

OR,

Heaven the Chriſtian's Home, and Death the Believer's Gain.

" For here have we no continuing city, but we ſeek one to " come." Heb. xiii. 14.

" For me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain." Philip. i. 21.

THE real believer, the genuine chriſtian, is that happy man, who, having been enlightened by the divine Spirit, has been enabled to ſee his loſt condition by nature, and has heartily cloſed in with Chriſt as the all-ſufficient Saviour; and being united by a vital faith to this great Redeemer, has an indiſputable claim to all the ſpiritual bleſſings, depoſited in the rich bank of the covenant of grace, that immutably ſecure and inexhauſtible treaſury. When in the lively exerciſe of faith, he ſees with tranſports of adoring gratitude and thankfulneſs, his moſt flagitious ſins expunged from the records of heaven, and all finally waſhed away in the precious blood of Immanuel, which cleanſeth us from all ſin. He ſees his naked ſoul beautifully arrayed in the imputed righteouſneſs of his Redeemer; by virtue of his all-ſufficient merits he knows he is exempted from condemnation, juſtified as faultleſs before the throne of God, and has a fair, indubitable title

to a pleaſant inheritance in the kingdom of everlaſting light and honor, peace and love, purity and joy, and he feels the reigning power of ſin giving place to the ſanctifying influences of the Holy Ghoſt in his ſoul. For ſo admirably well ordered are all things in the finiſhed plan of a poor ſinner's ſalvation, that his preſervation to this happy end, is certainly ſecured to that true faith, which renounces every other Lord, and diſcards all other falſe dependence; acknowledging no other ſource of hope, but what ſprings from the Saviour's blood; that free, everlaſting fountain for loathſome polluted prodigals to waſh in; and effectually conſtrains to the practice of univerſal holineſs.

This world alſo then the chriſtian inhabits as a foreign land, and not as his native home; and reſides in it like wandering travellers that have no ſtated dwelling, but move their lodging from one inn, town, and village to another: So likewiſe the believer conſiders himſelf as having no durable reſidence upon this mortal earth, but as advancing, though ſlowly, to obtain a country that is infinitely better; the affections of his heart, and the object of his hope, living already there, his proſpects, his longings and ſtrength, his powers and time, are exerted and devoted to haſten his ſluggiſh pace, to amuſe and comfort him on the way; and to direct and light his weary feet along the rugged road; which appears, ſometimes to the eye, ſo bad and foggy, as to be almoſt impaſſable; and the diſtance from his reſt ſeems to be far and great. And whilſt he is walking through this inhoſpitable deſert, this thorny path, to the delectable abodes above, he has many enemies to encounter, many difficulties to ſurmount: The inchanting temptations of the world, and the corruptions of nature, together with the powers of darkneſs, and the adverſe diſpenſations of providence, are diſtreſſing ſcenes; which all lovers of religion, and adherents to Chriſt, experience, in different degrees, more or leſs; when one wound is healed, a freſh one opening, when one burden falls off, another ſucceeding cloſe upon its back, frequently depreſſes human nature ſo much, that his progreſs in the divine life for awhile ſeems retarded; his heart is ſaddened, his comforts are impeded, and his views obſcured; whilſt, unknown to him, theſe weighty croſſes are promoting his ſpeed forward to his home, and ſhortening the length of his journey, by weaning his affections from too faſt hold on earth, and poliſhing the dimneſs of his grace.

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What everlasting thanks, then, are due to that infinite wisdom, that compassionate heart, and that tender hand, that so prudently, so seasonably, and so gently corrects us; by which means our languid desires for heaven are quickened, and our insatiable thirst for temporal enjoyments is allayed and abated. Heaven thus becomes more the object of our special regard and ardent wishes, claiming our more attentive pursuits; then we taste the happy fruits of affliction, and bless God for those sanctified strokes of his rod; finding thereby the world to sink in our esteem, by discovering the unsatisfactoriness of its gilded vanities, its specious falsities, and fleshly joys. For though no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to all such who are duly exercised thereby.

O my fellow christian travellers! my kindred heirs! when we stand as spectators to view, with sympathizing concern, a great majority of our fellow-creatures going on in the broad way to destruction, some abandoned to sensual lusts, some inordinately bent on the pursuit of fame, others wedded to gold as their idol, and many more, apparently free from the imputation of grosser vices, yet totally blinded; blinded to the saving light of the gospel, by their proud, self-righteous hearts; how should we summon every power we possess, and raise our highest notes of gratitude, to that august, that venerable, and amiable being, whose discriminating grace alone hath made us to differ: therefore let all boasting be excluded from our tongues; let all ideas of merit and indulgence to pride be banished from our hearts. May we, the favourite objects of such distinguishing mercy, dread the thought of thus ungratefully requiting such matchless love! Professing ourselves to be candidates for the world of immortal glory, may we not give the least shadow of countenance or sanction to such soul-killing, destructive evils; but on the other hand, instead of giving occasion to any to think that we boast in, or of ourselves; let us study in dependence on divine aid, to shew by the uniform tenor of our lives, that the genuine influence of this grace is to make us contented, humble, and holy; habitually remembering that the portion of the worldling is here, but ours is future. With all possible caution, then, and holy resolution, let us endeavour to avoid plunging into those miry pollutions, whereby our faith will be staggered, our consciences wounded, our evidences clouded, and our home

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for a time disappear. The impureness of this world, the various enemies we must associate with, and the sharp conflicts we daily have to struggle with, bespeak this earth not to be our abiding habitation, but much inferior to that state of unmixed bliss, with the hope of which the gospel of the blessed Jesus inspires us. O animating thought! most charming consideration! sufficient to reconcile us to all the trials allotted to us here! These black nights and stormy days, these severe and wintry seasons, are advancing to a final period; and are kindly intended by our heavenly Father, whilst they last, to subserve a most glorious end: that they may give wings to our faith, longings to our appetites, and springs to our obedience, in the view of that invisible state, where perfection blooms in youthful vigour and unfading verdure.

But to dismiss this point: Have we such an everlasting home in hope and prospect? then let us rest satisfied, with chearful submission to divine Providence; though mean be our present dwellings, few be our acquaintance, small our substance, and obscure our living; for our honor and happiness is truly great, and unspeakably large; for we are allied to the incarnate God, and he looks upon us with the same complacency of approbation, joy, and love, as an exulting Bridegroom beholds his chosen and endeared bride. By the impious, unthinking part of the human race, we may be rated the maddest fools, and disdained as the offscouring of all things. But let not this deject us, knowing that if we will live godly in Christ, we must expect such treatment as a common thing. And the glory of our character shines with superior lustre, even by those very attempts of our enemies to veil and deface it. Never let us envy those persons who sell their heavenly birth-right for earthly possessions, who barter every valuable treasure for insignificant commodities; but let us use all the enjoyments we are furnished and blessed with from the liberal hand of Providence, as good accommodations, and great helps, not hinderances, in our daily journey to that world of glory above, where darkness and ignorance, sin and sorrow, shall give place to that placid tranquility, and unalloyed felicity, which here no thought can comprehend, no imagination paint, nor heart conceive. But having discussed the first topic, I shall now proceed to the finishing head of this discourse, to shew you, that death is to all true believers gain.

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And allowing what has been ſaid as matter of fact, it naturally follows upon that ſuppoſition; it undeniably muſt be ſo. Death is indeed juſtly the object of ſlaviſh fear to all impenitent ſinners; as he ſpoils all their projects, defeats all their ſchemes, and blaſts their vain hopes, which they had unadviſedly formed, both as to this preſent life, and their future exiſtence. As he tranſmits theſe ſons of riot from their beloved companions, their unmanly luſts and ſhameful practices, to that place of divine puniſhment, where unceaſing torments rack the ſoul, and deſpair ſpreads her lowering clouds for ever: to ſuch chriſtleſs ſouls death is their everlaſting loſs, and this life only can be the object of their wiſhes and gain. But to the friends of Jeſus, the heirs of heaven, death is conquered, the grave is perfumed, and eternal glory ſecured. Death appears, then, to ſuch well-ripened ſouls, in a pleaſing form, and not with a frowning viſage; they may hail him with ſhouts of triumph, as a welcome meſſenger, who brings glad tidings of great joy to their raviſhed ears. Indeed nature, fond of life, may recoil at the thought of a ſeparation, and perhaps feel ſome reluctance in the firſt attack of this laſt enemy, in a view of thoſe ſharp agonies, and hard ſtruggles which frequently attend a diſſolution of this mortal ſyſtem; and be ready to ſhrink back at the affecting farewel of dear friends and beloved relations, and the more ſorrowful leave of the body, the long endeared companion of the ſoul. But when a believer deliberately conſiders, in the ſtrong actings of a lively faith, that the eternal intereſt of the ever-living tenant within, is ſafe in the hands and under the cuſtody of Jeſus, and can realize to the view of his mind, his approaching happineſs; all reluctance to an exchange of worlds is overcome. A party of angelic guards waits the diſmiſſed ſpirit, to conduct and eſcort it, with all the trophies of victorious renown, to that world, where it will meet with a welcome reception, and be newly cloathed in ſhining robes of perfect innocence, beauty and glory—be exalted to the higheſt honours—be entertained with the beſt of company—and be a ſharer of ſeraphic employments and boundleſs joys, ſuited and equal to thoſe improved and inlarged capacities, which will pour a torrent of ſublime delights into the very centre of the ſoul. In the extenſive, and unmeaſurable regions of heaven, the ſaints ſhall ſolace themſelves for ever in the beatific viſion of God, and in the open ſight of the Redeemer's unclouded beauties, and unrivalled excellencies. There

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will be a close and harmonious union, between all the glorious inhabitants of that happy place; there are no contending parties, no discordant hearts, nor one dissenting voice amidst the innumerable choir of glorified spirits; for all agree in perfect friendship and unity, concord and love. Strife, division, and persecution, never more shall raise their baleful heads; the absence of which constitutes a part of the purity, and perfection of their bliss. But what above all crowns their enjoyments, and consummates their honour and happiness, is the transporting thought that their blessedness runs parallel with eternity. When millions of ages and centuries shall be revolved, their enjoyments will remain, not the least impaired, but greatly improved. Surely then the christian may say to himself, 'This abundant gain must infinitely overbalance, all that I may seem to an eye of sense to lose by death.' And if faith be in full strength, I know we shall triumph in Christ at that hour, as a living, interceeding and all-sufficient Saviour; rejoice in God as a reconciled Father, and look up to heaven as our sure purchased possession, discovering no inward murmurings or complaints making no sorrowful reflections, uttering no despairings groans, nor expressing any dismaying fears; but on the contrary, shall have the most delightful ideas, be animated with the most joyful hopes, and be ready to burst forth into songs of praise. This will assuredly be our happy frame in the convulsions of expiring nature, when the world of spirits is opening its unparalelled scenes of wonder upon our closing eye-lids, proceeding from the happy effects of our union to the Lord of glory; not the result of our good works, but of the purest, and freest grace. Being elegantly drest in the wedding garment of our Saviour's spotless righteousness, we can silence all the misgivings of unbelief; we can baffle all the accusations of Satan, look the law in the face with exquisite delight and invincible boldness; yea, we can challenge all God's attributes themselves, though they each unite to condemn us while in our natural state; since this perfect righteousness of the lovely Jesus compleatly justifies us.

In such a spiritual frame, with the utmost calmness and serenity of mind. may we, if true believers, bid an everlasting adieu to all earthly enjoyments, and lay our weary heads down to rest in the silent bed of dust, with a firm and sweet persuasion in our breasts, that when the last trumpet of the archangel shall sound, we shall awake and instantaneously

neouſly ſtart into a new and immortal life; and the ſoul commence again a partner of the body in circumſtances inconceivably happy. But to ſhut up the ſubject, permit me in in a few words to addreſs myſelf to all the enemies of Chriſt.

You have read, ſirs, that manſions of glory are provided for all true believers, that they are now heirs of that incorruptible bliſs, and that death landing them on the heavenly ſhores, thus proves their eternal gain. And if ſuch exalted glories, and joys, be confined only to the faithful followers of the Lamb, as exactly correſponding with their tempers and hopes; directly the reverſe, ſinners, will be your dreadful portion, even the everlaſting wrath of God in the flaming priſon of hell. My heart bleeds, and I could ſhed floods of tears over your wretched choice, your miſerable and unhappy ſtate; when, I think, what would be the conſequence, if death ſhould arreſt you while engaged and entangled in your preſent purſuits, while you are going on to murder your precious ſouls by neglecting Chriſt, and careſſing your abominable idols. Now perhaps in the height of your mirth you may deem religion only fit for madmen, impoſtors, and fools, and feeling no ſenſe of a diſſolution apparent in your mortal fabrick, by various artificial inventions may attempt to ſtifle all convictions of mind, to ſtun and ſtupify the raging horrors of conſcience, and to make your heart more callous and adamantine than naturally it is. But when death knocks at your door, if not too ſuddenly to apprize you of your change, your conſcience will not be ſo lulled aſleep, but it will be awake enough to tell you the importance and abſolute neceſſity of religion; and in the unavailing anguiſh of your diſtreſſed ſouls, you will bitterly lament the deſpiſing this one thing needful. Why, then, will you periſh in your ſins? which I ſolemnly declare you inevitably muſt, unleſs you are reconciled to God through Jeſus his dear Son. But if you are willing to be ſaved, in the way the goſpel propoſes; I tell you, my fellow-ſinners, with raptures of joy, (for I have unqueſtionable authority ſo to do) though your ſins be as black as hell, and in number more numerous than the ſtars which beſpangle the midnight ſky; yet Chriſt will not abandon you, but cordially receive you, freely pardon you, and fully ſave you, if you go to him in the exerciſe of true repentance and faith. Attend therefore, and the Lord give you power to believe this attractive language of his love,

" Him

"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out." And that a divine bleſſing may accompany theſe imperfect thoughts to each ſoul that reads them, is the humble hope, and unceaſing prayer of their unworthy author, as it is his only motive in publiſhing them to the world.

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